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The Character of Jesus Christ.

The leading article in the *Hibbert Journal* for July is so entitled, and its author is Professor Francis G. Peabody, dean of the Divinity School of Harvard University. The public interest in Dr. Peabody's writings has been made keen by his important work, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*. The most conspicuous aspect of contemporary Christian thought, he says, is the renewal of popular interest in the character of Christ. Never was there a time when plain people were less concerned with the metaphysics or ecclesiasticism of Christianity. The construction of systems and the contentions of creeds, which once appeared the central themes of human interest, are now regarded by millions of busy men and women as mere echoes of ancient controversies, if not mere mockeries of the problems of the present age. But to follow Jesus though one does not understand him; to do the will even if one has not learned the doctrine; to perceive through much darkness that the life is the light of man — these are the marks of the new obedience. Questions of criticism, of authority, of divinity, may be insoluble; but the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, the teaching, the character of Jesus, are left; and the practical Christ is enough to satisfy a practical age.

The commanding interest of modern thought happens to be humanitarian, industrial, social, ethical. And in Jesus we come upon a teacher whose purpose does not appear to be primarily theological or metaphysical, but personal and ethical. We feel the contagion of personality, the persuasiveness of character. Never was a teacher less concerned with definitions or propositions, or more undisguised in his hostility to the system-makers of his age. Jesus' rewards were offered for growth in character. "Blessed are the meek; the poor in spirit; the pure in heart." His highest commendation was for those who accepted his tests of character. Drawn, then, to his person, as he thus lived and taught, impressed by the character he commended and illustrated, the first disciples were led on, through obedience to knowledge, through conduct to faith.

It may be the same today. Beyond this first impression of the character of Jesus Christ there remain, no doubt, further glimpses of the Eternal which it was his mission to disclose; but the path to these heights of discernment may lie for the present age, as it did for the first disciples, through the recognition of his ethical authority. Doing the will, one may come to know the doctrine. The return of the mind to the contemplation of the character of Jesus does not, as some appre-

hend, involve a permanent reaction from theological interest, or a permanent substitution of ethics for religion. On the contrary, it may indicate the natural sequence of Christian conviction. Out of the new appreciation of the moral leadership of Jesus may issue a new era of theological confidence. A movement which begins in attachment to a character may end in richer philosophical discriminations and broader religious visions. The Christian theology of the future may not improbably be a process of induction from the character of Jesus Christ.

From whatever side we approach the character of Jesus, an impression of mastery confronts us. Jesus is no gentle visionary, no contemplative saint; he is a person whose dominating trait is force. The appeal of Jesus is primarily to the will. He calls for a moral decision. He assumes in men a capacity for righteousness and expects from men a moral initiative. The discipleship he desires is not sentimental, emotional, occasional; it is rational, ethical, a form of obedience, a direction of the will. There is also to be observed an intellectual aspect of this quality of power; a strength of reasoning, a sagacity, insight, and alertness of mind which contribute to his authority. He was intellectually as well as spiritually equipped to adapt his teaching to his age. But it was not his scholastic wisdom which most impressed his hearers. There was perceived in him a quality of insight which, instead of being akin to the learning of scholars, was distinct from it, and was seen to be an original endowment, a spiritual gift. He was a teacher, but the authority of his teaching was not that of the scribes. His wisdom was not erudition. It left, not an impression of academic acquisition, but of penetration, discernment, grasp.

The Judaistic-Christian Opponents of Paul and His Gospel.

Continuing his articles in the *Expositor* on "Missionary Methods in the Times of the Apostles," Dr. Theo. Zahn in the July number describes the labors of those Judaistic-Christians who were opposed to the apostle Paul and the universal spiritual gospel which he preached, and who followed him into the gentile field to counteract his influence and to overthrow his work. This Judaizing party among the primitive Christians was composed of those who had once been Pharisees, and who, according to the judgment of Paul, had never been really penetrated by the emancipating power of the gospel, and who had no right to the Christian name of "brethren" (Gal. 2:4; 2 Cor. 11:26; Acts 15:5). In these Christian Pharisees might be found a goodly portion of that